After a season in which events on the field were consistently overshadowed by events off of it, one would hope that college football would pull its collective self together at the end and give us some premier bowl matchups to savor.

Won't happen. College football's season of strife ends in January with all the impact of the new phone book, giving us maybe the sorriest series set of major bowls since the BCS scheme was hatched back in '98. Virginia Tech-Michigan would be an interesting second-tier matchup, but it's a weak excuse for a Sugar Bowl. Clemson-West Virginia seems more like a mid-90's Carquest Bowl than the 2011 Orange Bowl. Oklahoma State-Stanford is a fun but a meaningless exhibition with the teams out of national-title consideration.

And to top it all off, you have a rematch in the BCS Championship Game. Look, I believe Alabama is one of the top two teams in the country. I picked the Tide to play for the title last summer and they haven't exactly made me look like an idiot in doing so. But second-best or not, they had their shot. Someone else should get one. Alabama's body of work- as if Rece Davis doesn't use that phrase enough- isn't any better than Oklahoma State's anyway. Don't get me wrong; I'll watch LSU-Alabama. But don't ask me to consider it some kind of championship game, because it really isn't.

I'll have the first part of my own Bowl Preview next week. But for this week, I'm going to put the real college football postseason on hold. For this week, I'm in fantasy land. Presented, for your entertainment, is the 2011 NCAA Football Tournament. You've heard of March Madness? Welcome to December madness. Start your imaginary office pools, get your imaginary bracket sheets filled out because the field has been named and the games are about to begin.

First, the structure of the Tournament:
- Automatic bids for all FBS conference champions.
- 5 at-large bids.
- Maximum of 2 teams per conference.
- First round through semifinals at campus sites, higher seed hosting.
- Championship Game on New Year's Day (or a day or two after as circumstances dictate) alternating between Orange, Sugar, Fiesta and Rose Bowl sites.
- Bowls preserved as an NIT-type consolation prize for non-qualifiers.

Seeds are based on the final Associated Press rankings. I probably shouldn't leave this to the likes of Jon Wilner but if the BCS isn't good enough, neither should its ranking system be.

Here is your 2011 NCAA Football Tournament bracket:

#16 Louisiana Tech (8-4) @ #1 LSU (13-0)

After playing conference games in far-flung outposts like Moscow, Idaho and Fresno, California, the WAC Champion Bulldogs are off to (relatively) nearby Baton Rouge- not to do them any favors. La Tech's 1-4 start included one-and-two-point losses to Houston and Southern Miss and a six-point defeat at Mississippi State, but the Bayou Bengals are an entirely different animal altogether. It's been their year, all year, starting with the opening-week domination of Oregon. Louisiana Tech is 1-18 all-time against LSU and hasn't beaten the Tigers since 1904, although the Bulldogs played them tough in a 24-16 loss two years ago.

#9 Virginia Tech (11-2) @ #8 Wisconsin (11-2)

It's always tough to be a road team in Madison, but the Hokies are probably just glad not to be seeing Clemson anytime soon. Both of Va Tech's losses came to the Tigers by a combined score of 61-13. Both of Wisconsin's losses came on desperation passes in the final seconds, killing hopes for a national title, but Badgers bounced back to win the Big Ten Championship and get a first-round home game in the Tournament. Virginia Tech has struggled mightily against big-time opponents outside the ACC but hopes to turn that around in Camp Randall.

#13 West Virginia (9-3) @ #4 Stanford (11-1)

Dana Holgorsen, AKA Bobcat Goldthwaite in a headset, takes his Mountaineers out to the Farm on a wave of relief after getting off the hook in the Big East race. West V's hopes looked dashed by a rough midseason- including the disaster at Syracuse- but three straight narrow wins to finish the campaign resulted in a title tie that broke in favor of the boys from Morgantown. Stanford hasn't lost to anyone other than Oregon in two years. But Geno Smith's passing attack is ahead of Andrew Luck's in the national rankings and the Mountaineers won't be in awe of the Cardinal, having seen LSU early in the season.

#12 Southern Miss (11-2) @ #5 Oregon (11-2)

That Southern Miss can't match Oregon's firepower is a given. Not many teams can- the Ducks are second in the nation in scoring offense for a reason. But in terms of scoring touchdowns without the ball, the Golden Eagles are peerless. They've scored 12 this season on returns of interceptions, fumbles and punts. They'll need one or two more against the Ducks. It's almost unfair- one week after facing the nation's most prolific passing offense on the road, Larry Fedora's team faces the nation's second-most prolific rushing offense, again on the road.

#14 Arkansas State (10-2) @ #3 Oklahoma State (11-1)

Other than a possible roadie at Tuscaloosa down the bracket, 'Poke backers can't be unhappy about the first two rounds being played at home in T. Boone Pickens, where their orange-clad heroes averaged 54 per game this season. Arkansas State is delighted just to go dancing: the Red Wolves hadn't had a winning season since 1992 until they conjured up a Sun Belt

Championship in Hugh Freeze's first and as it turns out only season as head coach in Jonesboro.

#11 TCU (10-2) @ #6 Boise State (11-1)

All right, a rematch! Terrific! Not really, but that's the way it works this time. The Horned Frogs won on the Smurf Turf in November but they'll have to do it again to advance in this Tournament. Boise destroyed pretty much everyone on its schedule aside from the Frogs, including an honest-to-goodness member of God's Conference. But TCU enters the fray on a seven-game winning streak and hasn't lost to a Mountain West opponent since 2008.

#10 Clemson (10-3) @ #7 Kansas State (10-2)

In Manhattan, Kansas, Cinderella weighs 230 pounds and scores touchdowns by the bushel. Quarterback Collin Klein ran over, around, away from and through tacklers for 26 scores, and led the Wildcats to their best season in nearly a decade. Quarterback Tajh Boyd led Clemson to its first ACC Championship in two decades by throwing the ball, not running it, ringing up 31 touchdowns and 3,578 yards through the air. Pundits were leaving the Tigers for dead before a rout of Virginia Tech in the ACC title game; K-State has come back strong from a 59-17 home demolition against Oklahoma on Halloween Saturday.

#15 Northern Illinois (10-3) @ #2 Alabama (11-1)

Alabama opened the season against a MAC opponent in Kent State and they'll open the Tournament against another MAC opponent in UNI. But the Huskies have something the Golden Flashes lack- Chandler Harnish. The senior put together a season he can put up against almost any other quarterback in America: 2,942 passing yards, 26 touchdown passes, 1,382 rushing yards, 11 rushing touchdowns. But even the most monstrous of monster games from Harnish probably won't be enough to stem the Tide in Tuscaloosa.

Not bad, right? To be sure, some of the first-round games are dogs, particularly those involving

the top three seeds. But there are also some intriguing matchups. Stanford-West Virginia, Kansas State-Clemson and Wisconsin-Virginia Tech have the potential to be very interesting. There's also the possibility of some good second-round matchups, including LSU-Wisconsin and Boise-Oklahoma State. I don't know about you, but I'll take this over what we're going to be watching in December and January in the real world. I'll be back next week with first-round results and second-round pairings for the 2011 NCAA Football Tournament.